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ABSTRACT

Equity theory proposes that outcome distributions are perceived as fair when the ratio of one's own outcomes (e.g., pay) to inputs (e.g., work) is equivalent to that of a comparison other. Research on reward allocations and reward satisfaction, however, suggests that females' behavior frequently does not conform to equity theory predictions. Given the task of allocating outcomes between self and a coworker, women tend to allocate less reward to self and more to a coworker than do men with equivalent inputs. This study examined equity sensitivity. Subjects (N=313) were undergraduates who were administered two instruments designed to measure equity sensitivity in work and relationships. Women scored significantly less entitled, or more benevolent, than did men in work and relationships. Sex differences were much larger for work contexts than relationships. Women's orientations were similar across the work and relationships domains, whereas men exhibited significantly more entitled preferences for work than relationships. One explanation for this may be that role demands of relationships are more similar for men and women than role demands of work organizations. Or it may be that men and women want similar things from relationships but different things from their work. This interaction may reflect differences in women's and men's status at work as compared to relationships. (ABL)

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COMPARING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ENTITLEMENT AT WORK AND IN RELATIONSHIPS

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Equity theory proposes that outcome distributions are perceived as fair when the ratio of one's own outcomes (e.g. pay) to inputs (e.g. work) is equivalent to that of a comparison other. Research on reward allocations and reward satisfaction, however, suggests that female's behavior frequently does not conform to equity theory predictions. For example, given the task of allocating outcomes (e.g. money) between self and a coworker, women tend to allocate less reward to self and more to a coworker than do men with equivalent inputs. Furthermore, when their inputs exceed those of a partner, women often allocate rewards equally, rather than equitably (c.f. Major & Deaux, 1982). In addition, research investigating reactions to outcome distributions has consistently found that women are no less satisfied than men with their own jobs or pay (Crosby, 1982), even though women are objectively paid less than men and recognize discrimination against women in general.

Major (1987) has suggested that such findings may be a result of women having a lover sense of personal entitlement than men, especially with regard to work related outcomes such as money. In support of this argument Major, McFarlin and Gagnon (1984) found that women worked longer, did more work, completed more correct work and worked more efficiently than did men for the same amount of pay. Women also paid themselves less for the same amount of

work in the absence of a comparison standard.

In a recent paper, Huseman, Hatfield and Miles (1987) proposed an individual difference measure, the Equity Sensitivity Construct, to assess the degree to which individuals are differentially sensitive to equity in work contexts. According to these authors, on the basis of scores on this measure individuals can be classified into three basic types: Benevolents, who prefer other's outcome/input ratios to exceed their own; 2) Equity Sensitives, who prefer their outcome/input ratios to be equal to those of comparison others; or 3) Entitleds, who prefer their own outcome/input ratios to be greater than the outcome/input ratios of comparison others. Although they report no data regarding gender differences on this scale, we hypothesized that women would be less likely to be entitleds and more likely to be classified as benevolent on this scale.

The second purpose of this study was to expand the exploration of individual differences in equity sensitivity into relationship domains. Past research suggests that equal allocations are preferred when individuals are concerned with facilitating harmonious social relationships, whereas equitable allocations are preferred when the objective is to increase economic production or foster task performance (Deutsch, 1975; Gamson, 1964; Leventhal, 1976). Thus, we hypothesized that both men and women would score more benevolent on a version of the Equity Sensitivity scale assessing orientations toward relationships than on a version assessing orientations toward work. Finally, the design of this study allowed us to examine whether females would score more benevolent relative to males across both domains, or only in the work domain.

Method

Subjects Subjects were 149 male and 164 female undergraduates at the State

University of New York at Buffalo.

Procedure Subjects were administered two instruments designed to measure equity sensitivity. Huseman et al's Equity Sensitivity Instrument (ESI-work) is a five item scale designed to assess equity sensitivity at work. For each question subjects are asked to allocate 10 points between two response options (sample item: I would be more concerned about: A) What I received from the organization or B) What I contributed to the organization). Hatfield, (personal communication) reports that the scale has a Cronbach alpha in the high 70s to low 80s. To assess Equity sensitivity in relationships, the scale was revised by substituting the word "relationship" for the word "organization" in each question (ESI-rel). Subjects filled out both instruments, in counterbalanced order, as part of a larger packet of questionaires. ESI-work and ESI-rel were always separated by other questionaires in the packet. Correlations performed on scores on the two scales revealed that scores on ESI-work were positively correlated with scores on ESI-rel, $r(1,310)=.52$, $p<.000$.

Results

Results of a 2 (Sex: male/female) X 2 (Domain: work/relationships) repeated measures ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for sex, $F(1,311)=20.10$ $p<.000$. As predicted, women ($M=30.68$) scored significantly more benevolent than men ($M=27.99$) in both domains. A significant main effect for domain was also observed $F(1,311)=51.23$ $p<.000$. Again, as predicted, both sexes scored more benevolent on ESI-rel ($M=30.59$) than on ESI-work ($M=28.21$). These main effects were qualified by a significant interaction $F(1,311)=23.68$, $p<.000$ (see fig. 1). Probes of the interaction revealed that males scored significantly more entitled on ESI-work ($M=25.93$) than on ESI-rel ($M=30.05$)

F(1,311)=68.98, p=.000, whereas females did not differ significantly in their orientations with respect to domain F(1,311)=2.76. The mean score for females on the ESI-work and ESI-rel scales were 30.28 and 31.07, respectively. Chi square analyses were also performed on the proportion of men and women classified as entitled, equity sensitive, and benevolent for each domain, using Hatfields (personal communication) criteria. A significant Sex X Category Chi square was observed on ESI-work ((2)=20.15) p<.0000, but not on ESI-rel ((2)=3.75,), p=.15. A greater proportion of men (22.1%) than women (6.7%) were classified as entitled and a greater proportion of women (22.0%) than men (10.1%) were classfied as benevolent. The proportion of men (56.9%) and women (63.7%) in the equity sensitivity category was comparable.

Discussion

Prior research revealed several intriguing sex differences in reward allocation patterns and outcome satisfaction. Major (1987) has suggested that these differences may reflect sex differences in perceived personal entitlement with regard to work-related outcomes. Results of the present study are consistent with this view. On a new personality instrument designed to assess individual differences in preferences for outcome/input ratios at work, women scored significantly less entitled, or more benevolent, than men. This sex difference also was observed on a second version of the instrument designed to assess outcome/input preferences in relationships.

A provocative interaction observed between sex and domain, however, revealed that the sex difference was much larger for work contexts than relationships. Furthermore, women's orientations were similar across the work and relationship domains, whereas men exhibited significantly more entitled preferences for work than for relationships. One possible explanation for this interaction is that the role demands of relationships are more similar for men and women than are the role demands of work organizations. Women are

disproportionately represented in occupations that require communal, or giving qualities (e.g., childcare, teacher, nurse) (Eagly, 1987). As a result, women and men may develop different orientations toward work-related exchanges (Eagly, 1987). Another explanation is that men and women may want similar things from their relationships but different things from their work. There is some evidence that women are somewhat less likely than men to value money and somewhat more likely to value expressive rewards at work (cf. Nieva & Gutek, 1982). Finally, this interaction may reflect differences in women's and men's status at work as compared to relationships. Specifically, women are disproportionately represented in lower status and lower paying occupations (Treiman & Hartmann, 1981). As a result, women quite realistically may expect to give more and get less from work organizations than men do. Women's and men's status in relationships may be more similar.

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	Males	Females
Work	25.93_{a}	30.28_{bc}
Relationships	30.05_{b}	31.07_{c}

Means with different subscripts differ significantly: a/b $p<.001$ b/c $p<.05$

Figure 1. Mean Equity Sensitivity Scores by sex and domain